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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, May 6, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: Kitchen Tools. Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Queen Victoria, so I've heard, had the saving and collecting mania. She refused to allow anything in the palace to be thrown away or otherwise discarded that could possibly be saved. This applied to worn clothes of the royal family as well as all kinds of old useless household items. Everything, from last year's worn out jacket to the chair with the broken leg or the children's old toys, everything was saved and packed away in the great chests and closets all during the long years of Victoria's reign.

I've often thought that many of us housekeepers are Queen Victorias about our kitchen equipment. So many kitchens are full of old, broken or useless utensils that have been allowed to accumulate and fill up space in the cupboards, drawers and back shelves. There's the egg beater with the handle off, the dull can opener that never worked well from the first but has been lying around the drawer these many years. There's the bent kettle, and the trick device bought for peeling vegetables that was a mistake but has never been discarded. You know the sort of things I mean. And these old veterans, long past their day of usefulness, if they ever had one, are treated as if they were in honorable retirement and allowed to take up valuable room, collect dust and make extra work at cleaning time.

As Uncle Ebenezer says, there's no use being sentimental about useless tools. The place for them is a burying ground, once they have ceased being good workers. And there's no use making your kitchen an asylum for their retirement. If the kitchen is to be a comfortable and efficient workshop, it can't be cluttered with unemployed antiques.

Once a year my Next-Door Neighbor celebrates what she calls a kitchen weeding day. On this occasion she says she makes a tour of her kitchen with a hard heart and a firm jaw and weeds out old or broken utensils, all the odds and ends no longer useful. These she either gives to someone who can use them or discards them. If she happens to have extras, duplicate equipment that she doesn't need at the time but may later, she finds a space out of the way on a high shelf where she can store these until they are called in for duty. Other items that are used only occasionally, such as her preserving kettle and canning equipment, she also gives a regular home on a high shelf and only gets them down when they are needed. The handy shelves and storage places easiest to reach she keeps for the utensils she uses every day.

That, of course, brings up the old question of where things should go in the kitchen, anyway. One good rule for comfort, convenience and efficiency is: Keep every utensil as near as possible the place where it will be used most. For example, knives, spoons, bowls and beaters belong near the work





table, right handy when you're mixing biscuits or doing other preparation jobs. And frying pans, kettles and kettle covers go near the range. That's the arrangement the specialists are advising to save work. It seems like sound logic to me. I never could appreciate the idea of chasing way across the room for a utensil and then chasing way back to put it away when it could be kept near the place where it will be used.

I'm glad too that the specialists are not in favor of hiding all utensils behind closed cupboard doors. They suggest hanging up the tools that are used most. It's a lot easier to take a tool off its own hook than to search through the drawer for it or bring it out of a full cupboard.

By the way, have you a rack for your knives, a nice convenient little rack placed on the wall near your work table, probably to the right of it if you're right handed. I hope so. It's so much handier to reach the knife you want that way. And the blades keep sharper than when the knives are knocking about with other things in drawers.

The small son in your family will enjoy making a little wooden rack for you in his carpentry class at school, or at home, if he has the tools. Just a small flat piece of wood with slits for each knife. Of course, you can also buy racks at the stores.

And now we're on the subject, I might as well mention two other handy racks--one to hold kettle lids and one to hold spices. The lid rack, of course, goes near the stove. I've often thought that there are few more nerve-shattering occurrences in the kitchen than an avalanche of kettle lids sliding out of the cupboard. You reach in to get the lid you want and out slide all its brothers and sisters clattering to the floor.

Enough to inspire a temper tantrum right then and there. And some women go through this trying experience almost every time they reach in for a lid. But a simple lid rack near the stove will prevent all this.

The third rack is for your spices and flavorings. A narrow shelf on the back of the cupboard door will hold them.

The right tool, in good condition, when and where you need it--that's the way to save time and trouble and to make cooking a pleasant job.

But I mustn't go on talking about tools one minute longer or it will be too late to talk over our Sunday dinner menu. I hope you're going to have company on Sunday, for this is a menu that deserves company. A springlike menu, it is, and the kind a man will appreciate especially.

All right. Are you ready for the menu? Broiled steak and mushrooms; Buttered new green asparagus; French fried potatoes; Lettuce with Russian dressing; and Rhubarb tapioca, for dessert.

Would you like to hear what the Recipe Lady has to say about cooking and serving asparagus? She suggests cooking asparagus either in the long pieces or cut up in about two-inch lengths, whichever you please. Either way, you put the asparagus into boiling salted water and boil until just tender.



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Be sure to cut off the tough, woody ends and wash the stems carefully so as not to break the tender buds. If the asparagus is old, you will want to remove the scales before washing as these may hold sand. If you are cooking the long pieces, lay them parallel in the kettle with the tips all pointing in the same direction. Boil until just tender, as I said. Then lift out the pieces carefully with two forks and lay them on pieces of buttered toast.

When asparagus is served from a platter or serving dish the toast makes it easy to lift out.

Now the recipe for rhubarb tapioca, another dish suggesting spring. Five ingredients:

1 quart of rhubarb cut in small pieces	1/2 cup of quick-cooking tapioca
2 cups of hot water	1 and 1/2 cups of sugar, and
	1/2 teaspoon of salt.

Shall I go over that list while you check? (repeat.)

Put the rhubarb, water and tapioca in the upper part of the double boiler. Cook over steam for 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the sugar and salt, and cook about 5 minutes longer, or until the tapioca is clear and the rhubarb is tender. Chill thoroughly before serving with plain or whipped cream.

